

The Old Fisherman's Widow, Mourning for Her Son, for Many Years Absent at Sea. [For the Tribune.]
[A Sketch from Life.]

BY ISAAC M'LELLAN.

I walked the verge of ocean grand,
Where fisher lads o'erspread the beach,
Watching the waves as each on each
They frothed and rippled to the land.
It was a lone, neglected spot,
With here and there the sedgy grass,
A pine tree rusted with the red,
A cedar nodding as I pass,
With here and there a bayberry hedge
Fast-rooted by the water's edge.

I turned me from the waste of foam
To gaze upon a cabin-home,
And there, beside the open door,
An old, old woman, blind and gray,
Sat in the sunshine of the floor,
And these sad-muttered words did say:

"All two-score years have slowly passed,
Yes, two-score years of ebb and flow,
Since with my boy I parted last—

Two-score of lengthened years ago!
Then golden-fair his ringlets shone,

Like rose-red his cheeks were bright,
His eyes were like a jewel-stone,

As brilliant as the morning light;

But two-score years their work have done,
And two-score years have blanched my cheek,

Sown age's blossoms white and bleak;

And two-score years have cast their snows,

Death's lies, on these cheeks of rose,
Since he departed. Much I fear

He'd never know me were he here!

"And now the leavening tablets hide
Him, that once chose me for his bride,
For two-score years above his head
Clover hath bloomed, and grass is spread!

The very day my boy did sail

His sire began to droop and fail,

And soon the partner of my days

Vanished in darkness from my gaze!

"I keep his little playthings still,
His brittle, worn, familiar toys,
The candle that he used to fill;

I love them, for they were my boy's!

His tinsel sword, the drum he beat,
The crimson feathered cap he wore,

Strutting with childish, tottering feet,

Across the cabin's sanded floor.

But most his painted bon'de priz,
The triumph of his father's art;

Dear was its pennant to his eyes,

Its white sail precious to his heart!

"And now, if living, he hath grown
A rough and bearded man of mold,
The luster in his eyes that shone,
All faded, colorless and cold;

Perchance he saith the stormy seas

A rover in some pirate-crew,

Shouting amid them in the breeze,

Wild words of imprecation too!

"I seldom think of him as dead,
On desert isle, or barren shore,

Placed by his shipmates in his bed,
Where rough the foreign breakers roar;

Perchance in some far tropic bay,

In some sequestered island cove,

Where the tall palm-tree shadows play

And birds of brilliant plumage rove,

Is scooped my absent darling's grave,

Where Indian forests scent the air,

Where the banana's clusters wave,

And tamarind thickets blossom fair!

"Ah! darling, come from foreign skies,

A man of peace, or man of crime,

Come, close thy aged mother's eyes,

Come soon, come quickly, while 't is time!

What Will He Do With It?

THE DIFFICULTIES OF IMPROVING A FARM.—A friend of ours has bought a farm. "Nothing singular in that," you may observe; "let him go to work and improve it."

Certainly. But how? That is the question. It is a great question, now that he has got his farm, to know what to do with it. He has no trouble in seeing what improvements are needed, or rather what would add to the value of the farm, but he does see difficulties in the way of making such as he would desire to make, and at the same time make the land carry the cost of its own improvement. He could spend money ad libitum, and would, perhaps, be willing to spend a reasonable amount in improvements if the expenditure would produce a fair return in future.

His farm is not upon the fertile prairie, bought at a dollar and a quarter an acre, or some such insignificant price, requiring nothing of him but to plow, and sow, and reap, and eat.

The difficulties of improvement are very small, and the former almost sure of payment for outlay, and profit upon his labor at every step.

The situation is very different. Let us state it. We have been called upon for advice. Perhaps it may be beneficial to a good many other persons beside our immediate friend.

The newly purchased farm is situated, so runs the advertisement, "upon the New-York and Albany post road, less than forty miles from the city, overlooking the Hudson River for twenty-five miles. It contains about one hundred acres, all under cultivation, except five acres of beautiful wood land. It is divided by stone walls into many fields of pasture, mowing, orchard, and plow-land, and is well watered with numerous springs. The house is a fine old mansion, which, with slight repairs, will be a fine residence for a family, desirous of living upon a self-supporting farm, &c., &c."

"Self-supporting!" That was probably the bidding of the bait that induced the purchaser to take the hook. We know that it has been the inducement to many a purchaser of a farm. We know that the present purchase should be self-supporting; that is, able to pay all expenses and support a family, but for many years it has not. Why? Not because the soil is not naturally good—good as any of the hill lands of Westchester County, but from some radical defect in its management or mode of culture. The question is, how to remedy this difficulty.

We find the aspect of the farm principally south-west, and, accordingly from the road a full mile to the rear lot, which affords one of the most magnificent views of 25 miles of the Hudson and its beautiful surroundings. For the base of a house "that cannot be moved," this spot would be hard to surpass in any other place where the land all around is level enough, smooth and rich, where ground and lava.

There are half a dozen other nearly as beautiful building sites, but that's not "what he is to do with it." It is what to do to make the farm "self-supporting." It has

been in the hands of tenants for a long time, who have left the aforesaid stone-walls to grow into hedge rows, and tumble-downs, showing how bad and unkempt gates, posts, and rails are, and how the trees, bushes, and weeds, now so late have grown crops hardly sufficient to pay for cutting, and the crops of plowed fields have been regularly growing less and less, until both tenant and landlord, if on them dependent, might starve.

The cause of this decay is patent. It is the want of manure. Little has been made upon the place, because it was not a stock farm, and everything that could be grown by the meanest sort of shallow plowing was carried off, and nothing returned.

You might as well expect an animal to live and reproduce itself as have nothing else to do. Laborers when they have nothing else to do, will sit in the directors' room and talk. Witness entered the directors' room when he was told he had been dismissed. They asked for gold, I said there was none. They then asked for silver. More was then entered the bank, don't know them. An oath was administered to me that I would not give the alarm or fire on the Confederate soldiers. In the directors' room was Seymour, a clerk, who was used like myself, a guard of two was over us. I was compelled to open the safe, and \$100,000 was taken out; they could not carry it, so the winter, the robbers forced the bank to open the vault, then Collins, Sparr, and another went into the banking room and took about \$60,000 in bills and greenbacks. Over \$200,000 of these were shown to witness and identified. I believe if I had resisted they would have shot me. The bank was seized during the robbery. Bragg came in and was seized by the collar, and a revolver presented at him. He delivered up about \$400. Bragg and another were forced into the room with me. After the raiders left I went out and saw the thirty horses, men, going out of the place, firing in all directions, among horses and children. The raiders were in citizens' dress, and carried no arms but revolvers.

"I shall want a road from the front to the back part of the farm. As it appears never to have had one, travel has been here and there through the fields."

So I see, and it is one of the greatest mistakes that a farmer makes not to have good farm roads. Lay out this road with a view to some day selling a portion of your land for buildings. This would be a good investment. If you can't afford to drive a team just sent some cattle, making the site of a grand estate. As it is, the field is a mile from your farm; between the two there should be a good road. If there is not, that field will always fail to receive its due share of manure. Make that road along your north line, with the exception of those two hills, which we advise you to go around.

Let me get over this fence and see what this field produces, and wherein it may be improved. Here is an orchard, perhaps of five acres.

It is reported that this last year were five hundred barrels of apples.

Then, if it was pruned and manured, the sales next year would be a thousand barrels, and the quality so much improved that the value would double.

Leaving the orchard, we walk across a buckwheat field, "sown at the halves," and the produce enough to pay almost the cost of labor—not quite so interest, and no manure is used the land, of course, deteriorates. Then land, with the river flowing between, fronting on two roads, is a good building site. Make the road twenty feet wide, and plant it upon each side with a row of fruit or ornamental trees. Make the cartway seven feet wide by digging out the soil to spread upon the adjoining fields, and fill in with small stones. You will find before you are done, that you have thus got rid of an immense quantity of stones. The market value of a road must be a road of stone. To occupy the farm land, and to make it a good building site, the making of the road will add to the value of the farm more than it will cost. Perhaps it would be the best way to let the making of the road by contract. Whatever course you adopt, remember that it is a work for all time, and must be done accordingly. Every dollar you expend on the road will be a safe investment.

"I should like to preserve that piece of woods. What do you advise about that?"

That you may preserve it for ornament, not profit. Whether and how much you can get for ten dollars a acre, I cannot tell you, but you will get more for it than you can get for a building site.

There is a blind compositor in a Cooper printing office.

He has a good income, and makes a new crop every six weeks, for a building site. Clearly it never will answer to devote that land to buckwheat, which at best, may give twenty bushels per acre, half of which goes to the tenant.

So we say to the owner, advertise that field for sale at once, and devote your energies to the remainder. You have enough of it, and the orchard might go with it at the same price. It won't pay to keep a garden, and the garden must be a waste of time. To occupy the farm land, and to make it a good building site, the making of the road will add to the value of the farm more than it will cost. Perhaps it would be the best way to let the making of the road by contract. Whatever course you adopt, remember that it is a work for all time, and must be done accordingly. Every dollar you expend on the road will be a safe investment.

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